

BOARD OF TRADE, EVANSVILLE, INDIANA.

MARCH 23, 1860.—Ordered to be printed.

Mr. E. B. WASHBURNE, from the Committee on Commerce, made the following

REPORT.

The Committee on Commerce, to whom was referred the memorial of the Board of Trade of Evansville, Indiana, asking the establishment of a local board of steamboat inspectors at that city, report :

That the bays and rivers of the United States are divided into districts, with a view of affording facilities for a compliance with the provisions of the act of August 30, 1852, in regard to the inspection of steamboats.

On submitting the memorial to the Treasury Department, the Secretary expresses himself thus :

TREASURY DEPARTMENT, *March 10, 1860.*

SIR : I have the honor to acknowledge your letter of the 9th instant, enclosing a petition for the establishment of a board of local steamboat inspectors at Evansville, Indiana, upon which you ask the views of this department.

In reply, I beg leave to state that there are now established by the act of August 30, 1852, upon the Ohio river and its tributaries, local boards of inspectors at Louisville, Nashville, Cincinnati, Wheeling, and Pittsburg, and that by the existing arrangement of the districts of the supervising inspectors under that act, one district embraces the Ohio river and its tributaries from its mouth up to and including Kentucky river, and another supervising district comprehends the Ohio and its tributaries above the mouth of the Kentucky river. The supervising inspector of the former of these two districts is at Louisville—for the latter, at Pittsburg. It is obvious that under this arrangement the Ohio and its tributaries are now favored with greater facilities for inspection under that act than any other section of the United States of similar extent and importance. Unless, therefore, it is the decided policy of Congress to increase the number of these local boards in every part of the United States where property in steamboats is held, I think there is no occasion or propriety for in-

creasing the present number of local boards upon the Ohio river and its tributaries

It is evident that the most material ground assigned in the petition for the establishment of a local board at Evansville is founded upon a misapprehension of the provisions of the act of 1852. It is alleged that "steamboats owned in this city have been greatly delayed and damaged in their business, and have been in many instances compelled to make costly trips to Louisville in order to comply with the inspection laws, and pilots and engineers residing in and below this city have been put to great expense, trouble, and delay by being compelled to visit Louisville for the purpose of obtaining their official certificates." Now, the twelfth paragraph of the ninth section of the act requires every local board to inspect steamers where there is no local board, and the twenty-second section requires the supervising inspectors to perform the same duty. Whenever the owners of steamboats of Evansville require their vessels to be inspected under the law, they have only to serve a reasonable notice upon the supervising inspector or a local board, and if their requirements are not complied with in due time by the proper inspectors, a remedy for negligence on their part will be found by this department upon presentation here of the necessary facts. A little foresight, therefore, on the part of the steamboat owners, as well as the pilots and engineers at Evansville, in giving the proper notice in advance, would effectually prevent the expense and delay stated in the petition.

Unless it shall be deemed expedient to appoint local boards of steamboat inspectors at every port in the United States where any considerable number of steamers are owned, I am unable to perceive any sufficient ground for the establishment of a local board at Evansville. As the efficiency of these inspectors depends in a great degree upon their constant employment in their official duties, this department has heretofore expressed the opinion, which I now beg leave to repeat, that the existing provisions of the act of 1852, in regard to the locality of inspectors, appear to be adequate for ordinary and probable requirements, except upon the waters of the upper Mississippi and Oregon; and it has accordingly declined to express its approbation of the establishment of new local boards of steamboat inspectors at any other points. The petition is herewith returned.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

HOWELL COBB,
Secretary of the Treasury.

Hon. E. B. WASHBURN,
Chairman of Committee on Commerce, House of Reps.

The committee have therefore directed me to make an adverse report.